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Issues related to assessment and management of land and water resources on an integrated basis: contribution to the preparatory process for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on integrated planning and management of land resources and on agriculture

Draft decision submitted by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. M. Matuszak, on the basis of informal consultations

Contribution to the preparatory process for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development: integrated planning and management of land resources and agriculture

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, by which it directed the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, in formulating its programme of work, to take into full account the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, so as to ensure that its own work would be structured to contribute to the work of the Commission,

Also recalling that, in the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the sectoral theme for the eighth session of the Commission, to be held in 2000, is integrated planning and management of land resources and that the economic sector focus will be agriculture,

Noting the inextricable interrelationship between agriculture and water,

Recalling that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is the task manager for the implementation of the chapters in Agenda 21 relating to land management and agriculture,

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Invites the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to prepare a background paper for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the interrelationship of agriculture and water; the document should examine the use of water by agriculture, recognizing the scarce and vulnerable nature of water and also recognizing agriculture as one of many users and the primary consumptive use of water on a global basis; the document should also examine the following issues, analyse their importance and recommend actions or alternatives, citing case studies where possible:

1. **Overarching issues**

   The potential water crisis and the role of agriculture as water dependent and highly vulnerable to water deficiencies, and also with regard to its impact on both water quality and water quantity;

   Conciliation of water availability and agricultural planning without transboundary agreements between States to allocate water and guarantee availability;

   Extension and promotion of technology and information on water and agriculture;

   Demand management;

   Integrated approaches to soil and water conservation;

   Interrelationship of agriculture and water quality;

   Importance of community participation in decisions affecting shared water sources;

   Importance of the availability of agro-meteorological, hydrological and hydro-geological data;

   Need for a re-evaluation of the concept of food security, taking into account water shortages, and consideration of meeting nutritional needs through trade and crop diversification, taking into account customs and marketing as appropriate;

   Consideration in programme planning, policy and reviews of relevant international conventions, treaties and agreements relating to water management or agriculture, for example, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;

2. **Irrigation and drainage**

   Use of fossil water for crop production and unsustainable use of groundwater, threatening drinking-water supplies;

   Agricultural drainage and long-term agricultural yield;

   Soil and aquifer salinization;

   River depletion problems (for example, the Yellow River and the Aral Sea);

   Development of environmental guidelines for irrigation and drainage;

3. **Rain-fed agriculture**

   Need to emphasize the non-irrigated sub-optimal producers, who are also the most vulnerable and among the poorest producers;

   Need for varieties that are drought tolerant, flood tolerant and more water efficient;

   Need to catalogue and disseminate new and traditional water-saving technologies and integrated soil and water conservation techniques;

Need to consider rainwater harvesting techniques and ponds or water-holding areas for dry season agricultural production and for livestock and fish production;

Soil and water conservation;

Importance of soil and water conservation techniques, including contour ploughing, conservation tillage and buffer strips;

Type of soil, crop and water quality has to be considered in relation to the availability of land and water resources;

Promotion of riparian buffers;

Protection of wetlands;

Use of an ecosystem approach to development and planning;

Control of chemical pollution;

Promotion of integrated pest and integrated nutrient management systems;

Encouragement of organic food production;

Monitoring of groundwater and surface water for nutrient loads and pesticides (for example, nitrate contamination of groundwater in Europe and persistent problems from pesticide misuse in El Salvador);

Opportunities for organic production;

In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations should include consideration of water in all of its preparations and discussions for the preparatory meeting it is co-sponsoring with the Government of the Netherlands.